

Summary of NHS England board meeting – 30 March 2023

For more detail on any of the items outlined in this summary, please find the [full agenda and papers available online](#).

Chief executive officer update

- As of the 1 April, Health Education England (HEE) will join NHS England (NHSE)
- Workforce challenges are at the top of the agenda for NHSE and they will continue to work on the long-term workforce plan in the coming months
- The recent employment tribunal for Michelle Cox was a hard read and an eye opener. She acknowledged that they let Michelle down and that learning opportunities had been missed. They will be taking steps to ensure colleagues don't go through what she did
- In terms of wider pressures in the NHS system, the most pressing challenge has been within urgent and emergency care pathways (UEC). Actions taken during winter can be seen in UEC report
- Industrial action has presented additional challenges. Local teams have coped during the but it has taken a large amount of work which has been flagged as unsustainable. NHSE welcomes the news from government and unions on the agenda for change and hopes to see a resolution to industrial action
- All services are planning for the junior doctor strike in April and NHSE recognise that targets could be impacted by cancellation of elective activity. Patient safety will always remain the priority
- The staff survey was published a couple of weeks ago which shows a decrease in satisfaction in several areas. Some was the result of pay and workload. On the other hand, more staff felt supported by managers and felt they had more opportunities to develop their career pathways
- Primary care access plan should hopefully be published soon also. Relevant support will be given to colleagues
- The delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services was published on 30 March
- The Patricia Hewitt Review into integrated care systems (ICSs) is due to be published in the first week of April 2023
- NHSE are looking for new non-executives to join the board
- The social attitudes survey has shown a drastically low level of satisfaction with the NHS despite the public still supporting the fundamental principles of the NHS.

Operational performance

Covid-19

- The NHS has faced five waves of Covid-19 in the past 12-month period and has now treated one million patients with Covid-19
- The first COVID-19 wave of 2023 peaked on 23 February with 8,107 beds occupied.

Urgent care

- In February 2023 there were 1.91m attendances in A&E, 4.8% higher than in February 2022. There were also 473,000 emergency admissions, 2.8% higher than in February 2022
- Bed occupancy has consistently been above the recommended maximum level of 92%
- Many discharge challenges are linked to capacity challenges outside of acute trusts, including the adult social care and community care sectors.

Elective recovery

- The most recent data published shows a stabilisation of total waiting list size
- The number of people waiting more than 78 weeks for elective treatment is down more than 80% from its peak
- The biggest risk to eliminating 78 week waits is industrial action. The NHS is working to treat the remaining 24,440 patients who have been waiting over 78 weeks over the March and April period. This is in line with the elective recovery plan ambition.

Diagnostics

- The percentage of patients waiting for less than six weeks for a diagnostic test has improved from 68.7% in December 2022 to 69.2% in January 2023
- Community diagnostic centres (CDCs) have steadily increased capacity over the past 18 months and 3.32 million tests have been delivered by CDCs since July 2021.

Cancer

- Over 320,000 people received treatment for cancer over the last year between November 2021 and October 2022. This is the highest year on record, and up by more than 8,000 on the same period pre-pandemic

- Early diagnosis rates have risen for the first time in a decade. In 2023, the medical journal *Annals of Oncology* published findings showing that cancer deaths are around 10% lower in the UK compared to five years ago.

Financial report

- Budget planning for 2023/2024 is currently underway, with draft plans submitted on 30 March 2023. NHSE believe there is a lot more work to do to get some systems towards balanced plans. The plans will be reviewed again in four to six weeks to move towards financial balance
- Pay is an issue going forward. NHSE will have discussions with the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) and the Treasury going forward. The Government and the Treasury have mentioned that they will provide new funding to ensure no impact on front line services and quality of care
- NHSE's aim is to cut costs in this next financial period as we are coming out of the Covid-19 pandemic
- On aggregate, systems have a year-to-date (YTD) overspend of £744m. NHSE is forecasting systems will have a year-end (Y/E) overspend £517m.

NHS innovation, research and life sciences: mobilising the NHS behind research and innovation

- Innovation now more than ever is playing an important role in the success of NHS work. The ongoing pressures of pandemic recovery and limits on capacity for the system to engage in research and innovation, along with the broader inflationary and economic context, are resulting in a fall-off in collaborative life sciences activity
- NHSE will be reporting on progress made in 5 priority areas:
 - **Embedding research** – increasing speed, scale, and diversity of research in the NHS
 - **Demand signalling and horizon scanning** – identifying and articulating NHS innovation and research needs and systematically searching for solutions
 - **Uptake proven innovation** – building pipelines of innovation medicines, medical devices, diagnostics and digital products and supporting their adoption in the NHS
 - **Building innovation capacity** – supporting NHS organisations and workforce to develop, test and implement innovative solutions
 - **Innovator support** – easier navigation for innovators within the innovation ecosystem and delivering transformation commercial deals at scale.

Three-year delivery plan for maternity and neonatal services

- The aim of the [plan](#), published on 30 March, is to improve maternity and neo natal services across the NHS through a range of ambitions. This includes halving the stillbirth, neonatal death and maternal death rate between 2010 and 2025 by 20%. Progress towards this ambition was made, with the stillbirth and neonatal mortality rate in 2021 being 19% and 30% lower compared with 2010. However, this progress has been affected by the Covid-19 pandemic. It is clear to NHSE that inequalities exist within maternity care and that there is more to be done to improve outcomes for those from ethnic minority backgrounds
- Findings from the [CQC maternity survey](#) show that women have a positive experience of care during pregnancy, birth and postnatally. However, the covid-19 pandemic and workforce shortages have had a negative impact on women's experiences
- The delivery plan was developed through a series of engagements, including 50 discussion events and online surveys which engaged with 3000 service users, staff, leaders and stakeholders
- Principles of the plan:
 - Listening to and working with women and families with compassion
 - Growing, retaining, and supporting our workforce
 - Developing a culture of safety, learning and support
 - Standards and structure that underpin safer, more personalised and more equitable care

Revised NHS England board governance framework

- Due to HEE joining NHSE on the 1st April, work is being carried out to ensure a safe transfer of operations and governance which requires changes to the NHS England governance manual
- See the revised board governance framework [here](#).

Annual emergency preparedness, resilience, and response assurance report

- The annual emergency preparedness, resilience and response (EPRR) assurance report is a core function of the NHS and a statutory requirement of the Civil Contingencies Act (CCA) 2004
- The role of the EPRR is linked to the disruptive threats outlines in the national security risk assessment and the need to take charge during emergency situations
- **Key activities for 2022/23 included:**
 - Work on the NHS resilience work programme for 22/23 including support to incident response activities
 - Strengthening governance structures for the development and delivery of EPRR guidance

- Key publications such as the EPRR framework, national incident response plan, minimum occupational standards for EPRR, a triannual review and update of NHS core standards for EPRR and the business continuity management toolkit
- Ongoing work to support Integrated Care Boards (ICBs) with their new EPRR statutory duties
- The roll out of principles of health command training to support staff at new organisations
- **Priorities for 2023/24 include:**
 - Producing a lessons identified framework that supports NHS organisations to appropriately gather intelligence of an event, exercise or incident
 - Developing an action plan and embedding learning from the COVID-19 lessons identified report
 - Supporting the NHSE inquiry team in providing evidence to contribute to the UK Covid-19 inquiry
 - Supporting implementation of the recommendations from the Manchester arena inquiry report
 - Developing a pandemic disease preparedness programme
 - Planning guidance for NHS in England to ensure services can respond and recover from power outage scenarios.