

Health and Wellbeing Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Briefing Note: Phlebotomy update from Mid and South Essex NHS Foundation Trust

Purpose of the briefing note: To answer previous questions from members and provide updates on the provision of phlebotomy services in Thurrock

- 1.1 This briefing provides an update on topics of questioning from members at the previous HOSC meeting on 31 August 2023. It explains why there has been difficulty booking appointments for some patients and what the Trust, working with Pathology First, is doing to improve wait times for blood tests.
- 1.2 Capacity - During the pandemic, there was a need to move phlebotomy clinics away from the hospital settings to reduce footfall. This has involved new clinics opening in the community and encouraging GPs and their patients to use these new clinics. This also enabled the opportunity to increase capacity. However, demand for appointments continues to grow from 30,000 phlebotomy appointments per month in 2020 to 42,000 in 2021 and 45,000 in 2022.
- 1.3 Availability of walk-in clinics and urgent on the day appointments – Patients needing non-urgent blood tests are attending clinics for patients requiring urgent blood tests. As a result, the clinics offering urgent blood tests are experiencing exceptional demand and often vulnerable patients requiring urgent tests are reporting waits of several hours. Where this is the case, we are encouraging patients and GPs to use the non-urgent service. There are approximately 2000 non-urgent phlebotomy appointments readily available each weekday at clinics across the area. Patients book these in advance via the dedicated phone line or online. Once booked, patients using these appointments and clinics typically wait five minutes for their booked appointment.
 - If GPs require an urgent appointment for a patient, they can book by calling a specific mobile number available only to GPs.
 - More urgent appointments have been made available at some of the larger clinics.

There is some same-day queue / walk-in appointments – These are for hospital-based patients, but we allow a few appointments for those patients with urgent GP referrals. These are available at either Basildon or Orsett Hospital Outpatient Departments (OPD).

- 1.4 A high number of people book appointments but do not attend (DNA). For example, our Thurrock clinic has one of the highest levels of patients not attending their appointment. The total number of patients who did not attend their appointments in August across all clinics was 2,931. We are working on a patient communication to explain the impact of DNAs.
- 1.5 We have opened another phlebotomy chair on Saturdays in Basildon Hospital and continue to offer additional clinic hours as and when staffing allows in Basildon and Orsett hospitals.
- 1.6 Capacity at our clinic in Corringham Integrated Medical and Wellbeing Centre has been reviewed and increased.
- 1.7 Phlebotomy staffing – we are recruiting more staff and have recently appointed a new Quality Lead, several Supervisors, and a new Training Lead for the service. We are also training Healthcare Assistants (HCAs), who predominantly work on Basildon Hospital wards, to be able to bleed patients. We are working to train seven HCAs as a matter of priority which will enable us to provide better coverage in the hospitals, releasing our phlebotomists to undertake more community work. We are also looking to work with our health partners across Thurrock to add another one-day phlebotomy service in one of our clinics in the area.

For any questions regarding this briefing note, please contact:

Name: Valerie Pentney

Telephone: 01245 513711

E-mail: Valerie.pentney1@nhs.net